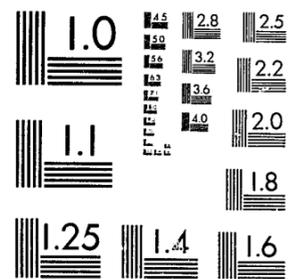


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A REVIEW AND EVALUATION
OF
POLICE COMMUNICATIONS

A Technical Assistance Report
Prepared for -
THE POLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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Task No. 7905001

Performed by -

THE ASSOCIATED PUBLIC SAFETY
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICERS, INC.

New Smyrna Beach, Florida 32069

Under a grant from -

THE LAW ENFORCEMENT
ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION

DENNIS L. BRUNS, ADVISOR

I. INTRODUCTION

The Polk County Sheriff's Office requested a study be completed in order to provide the information necessary to make a sound decision with regard to county-wide consolidation dispatching operations. Areas to be explored were:

1. Does the existing Civil Defense Emergency Operations Center have the capability of providing 24-hour dispatching service?
2. If not, what would be needed to provide such service?
3. Can existing radio coverage be improved?
4. What is the suggested course of action to implement 24-hour dispatching?

Law enforcement agencies affected by such a proposal are the Polk County Sheriff's Office, the City of Dallas Police Department, the City of Independence Police Department, and the City of Monmouth Police Department.

Fire agencies involved are the Dallas Fire Department, the Monmouth Fire Department, Independence Fire Department, and several rural departments.

It should also be noted that local Civil Defense operations must also be involved in a consolidated effort.

This project was sponsored and supported by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration utilizing the Technical Assistance Program (Project 17) developed and incorporated by the National Office of the Associated Public Safety Communications Officers, Inc.

Information gathered for the project was a result of on-site visits to each agency involved and interviews with dispatching personnel. In depth interviews with Polk County Sheriff William H. Berlin and Undersheriff Gary K. David were also conducted.

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II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

It is my opinion that Polk County, Oregon is an ideal environment for the implementation of a consolidated communications facility. Obstacles needed to be overcome are primarily those of system design and implementation.

Problem elements to be discussed are:

1. Physical consolidation of services
2. Existing equipment capabilities
3. Political considerations
4. Technical aspects
5. Problem Analysis

III. PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Polk County Sheriff's Office

The communications facility for the Polk County Sheriff's Office is located in the Polk County Courthouse in Dallas. This facility is physically very small and lacks security and privacy. Currently, the dispatchers are responsible for both dispatching responsibilities as well as those of records clerk. The dispatchers are civilian personnel and their training is almost exclusively on the job. The average salary is \$821.00 per month.

Communication personnel are responsible for one to two Polk County Sheriff's deputies in the field from 0800-1700 hours seven days a week. Additional responsibilities for the Dallas Police Department, Dallas Fire Department and the Dallas Ambulance Service are assumed from 1700 hours until 0800 hours.

Equipment utilized in this facility consists of an older model GE console base station with six frequency capability. These frequencies are:

- Channel one - not in use at this time
- Channel two - Polk County Law Enforcement network
- Channel three - Polk County road crew
- Channel four - Tri-County network
- Channel five - County Fire network
- Channel six - State Emergency network

Backup capabilities for these channels are non-existent.

An overall view of the Polk County Sheriff's communications situation reveals the following problems.

First, the dispatching facility lacks security for its personnel as well as privacy from other departmental employees. Added switchboard and clerical duties distract from dispatching functions. Dispatcher training is minimal and lacks standardization. Dispatchers do not utilize headsets, therefore creating added distraction. Lack of any backup equipment renders the facility ineffective should failure occur.

Field operations are hampered in many aspects. Lack of additional coordinating frequencies creates unnecessary channel congestion on the County Law Enforcement network. "Dead spots" throughout the county curtail the assurance of officer safety and emergency response. Non-scanning type of mobile equipment disallows any inter-agency monitoring.

Dallas Police Department

Dispatching operations for the Dallas Police Department are located in the City Hall building. The area is large and lacks any security and privacy. Dispatchers are responsible for the city switchboard and the public information desk along with police and fire operations.

Civilian personnel comprise the dispatching corps and training is on-the-job. Average salary is \$680.00 per month.

Communication personnel are responsible for one to two street officers per eight hour shift. Hours of operation are from 0800 to 1700 hours, Monday through Friday. At 1700 hours and on weekends and holidays, dispatching functions are relinquished to the Polk County Sheriff's Office.

Equipment consists of a Motorola base station with three frequency operations. Those frequencies being:

- Channel one - County Law Enforcement network
- Channel two - County Fire network
- Channel three - City of Dallas Public Works

Again, as in the case of the Polk County Sheriff's Office, backup capabilities are non-existent.

Dispatching problems associated with this facility are lack of security, added switchboard and clerical duties and lack of sophisticated training.

Field problems are the lack of operational frequencies and non-scanning mobile equipment.

Monmouth Police Department

The City of Monmouth Police Department is dispatched from the police building from 0800-2400 hours. Civilian dispatching personnel are utilized at an average monthly salary of \$800.00. Dispatchers are responsible for one to two field units per eight hour shift. On the job training is provided. Physical security and additional clerical duties are problem areas for communications personnel.

A GE base station is used for dispatching on the following two frequencies:

- Channel one - Polk County Law Enforcement network
- Channel two - City of Monmouth Public Works

Dispatching service is relinquished to the City of Independence Police Department communications facility from 2400 hours until 0800 hours and during lunch hours.

Patrol units are equipped with new Motorola four channel "Convert a Comm" radios.

"Dead spots" do exist in some portions of the city and non-scanning radios curtail inter-agency monitoring. The City of Monmouth operates primarily on the "shared" Polk County Law Enforcement network, however, they utilize a "12 code", which differs from the ten code used by the other three agencies operating on this network. There is also a lack of any operational frequencies.

City of Independence Police Department

Communication operations are housed in the police building, and security is minimal. Dispatching for the police department is provided 24 hours with additional responsibilities for the Monmouth Police from 2400 hours to 0800 hours and during lunch hours.

All dispatchers are civilian and are trained on the job. Additional clerical duties are also present.

Pay levels for communication personnel are a major reason for high employee turnover. Dispatchers are paid minimum wages and are only scheduled for seven and one-half hour shifts, thus curtailing city employee benefits. Communication employees are responsible for one to two field units per shift.

Equipment consists of an older model Motorola base station and a Regency base station. Frequencies utilized are:

- Channel one - Polk County Law Enforcement network
- Channel two - Polk County Law Enforcement network repeater by-pass

Field operations are plagued by interference and "dead spots". Non-scanning radios are also prevalent.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Such conclusions and/or recommendations will be covered under two general headings. The first being operations and secondly technical aspects.

Operations:

It is my opinion that the dispatching services for the Polk County Sheriff's Office, the Cities of Dallas, Monmouth and Independence Police Departments and all related fire and ambulance be consolidated in the Polk County Emergency Operations Center. Reasoning behind this suggestion is threefold. First, the Emergency Operations Center is equipped with modern, state of the art equipment which is fully capable of handling county-wide law enforcement and fire and rescue operations in conjunction with any necessary disaster needs. This system is also equipped with adequate back-up capabilities.

Secondly, the Emergency Operations Center provides both the physical security and privacy necessary for efficient and effective operations.

Finally, the necessary moving of equipment will be of minimal costs due to the central location of the facility.

Communications personnel from all affected agencies should be employed by the Polk County Sheriff's Office. This would standardize pay scales and employee benefits. Participating agencies, other than the Polk County Sheriff's Office would provide funding on a contractual basis. A board of directors would be instituted and comprised of representatives from each agency involved with the system. A Director of Communications position should be established and filled by a qualified applicant. All radio licenses

should be re-applied for changing the licensee to the communication entity.

A telephone/complaint station should be added to the EOC with primary responsibility being that of switch-board operator.

Existing consoles should be designated as a law enforcement position and a fire and rescue position. The fire and rescue position could also serve as telephone/complaint station during less busy periods.

An additional RAIN terminal and printer should be installed, thus creating access to the computer for both dispatching positions. A separate "mini-computer" should also be considered for "in house" information storage and access.

All alarms which were monitored at each separate facility should be incorporated into a central alarm panel located in the EOC.

Training for communications personnel should be standardized and incorporated into a training section of a policy and procedure manual. Actual console training should be requested from the vendor who supplied the equipment. Operational training could perhaps be provided by a consulting firm or the local chapter of APCO.

Technical:

First and foremost a consultant should be obtained to conduct a propagation study and make specific recommendations concerning radio coverage. Personally, I feel a western repeater site should be established and tied to the existing system. A voter/comparater system should also be explored.

Next, proper ventilation needs to be provided in the storage compartment for the new backup equipment.

An automatic transfer needs to be affixed to the

emergency generator. Also, a basement location for the generator should be explored.

Grounding for the antenna on top of the courthouse should be checked.

Finally, two modifications to equipment should be made if consolidation efforts are made. The tape/logger in the Sheriff's Office needs to be expanded to twenty channel capacity and the local forest service frequency should be added to the consoles.

TELEPHONE/COMPLAINT STATION

The telephone/complaint station suggested should integrate all of the switchboard functions for each agency involved in the recommended consolidation. This telephone/complaint station should be manned from 0800 hours thru 1700 hours, Monday thru Friday. Due to the minimal traffic associated with the Fire and Rescue position, this position can assume the additional duties of the telephone/complaint operation from 1700 hours to 0800 hours and on weekends.

RECORDS FUNCTIONS

The records functions which will no longer be maintained by communications personnel should be centralized and be accessible via the computer terminal. The responsibilities associated with "counter complaints" will have to be absorbed by the affected agencies. If these responsibilities cannot be fulfilled, a telephone with direct ringdown capabilities to the Communications Center can be located in the public reception area of each agency.

DUTIES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

The position of Communications Coordinator suggested in this report would have the following responsibilities:

1. Planning
 - a. Setting objectives
 - b. Communicating objectives
 - c. Prioritizing both long-term and short-term plans
2. Organizing
 - a. Determine activities necessary to provide public access and ensure officer safety
 - b. Establish authoritative relationships
 - (1) chain of command
 - (2) location of decision making source(s)
 - c. Establish advisory relationships to ensure direct input from user agencies
3. Staffing
 - a. Formulate job descriptions and specifications
 - b. Establish hiring practices
 - c. Design training curriculum
 - c. Initiate an evaluation system
4. Directing
 - a. Establish a management by objective (MBO) program
 - b. Incorporate motivational techniques for employees
5. Controlling
 - a. Create a working budget
 - b. Forecast future budgets
 - c. Formulate inventory control systems

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